

COMPASS: Points of view from the community

Low Carbon Economy Act keeps Alaska's needs in mind

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In Wednesday's commentary, we announced our support for legislation to reduce domestic carbon emissions. The Low Carbon Economy Act should halt the potentially devastating effects of global climate change, and we expect it will benefit our state in many other ways as well.

The bill's "cap and trade" program was carefully crafted to account for the needs of Alaskans. It includes funding to help rural consumers overcome rising energy prices. To lower utility costs, additional funds are designated to help Alaskans improve the insulation of their homes. The state will be granted emissions "credits" to help industries and coal-burning utilities weather cost increases without cutting jobs.

While this measure would slightly increase the price of natural resources vital to Alaska's economy, it will not prohibit — and may actually encourage — future exploration and development. Funding to research and implement technological advances (up to \$210 billion through 2030) will be used to construct and modernize power plants capable of capturing and storing all carbon output. In turn, this carbon would power enhanced oil recovery projects and



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maximize production in fields across our state.

Tens of billions of dollars will be allocated to remedy the problems Alaskans already face, from relocating low-lying villages and building seawalls around others, to helping handle the costs of road repairs, sinking pipeline supports and repairing faulty building foundations. Adaptation funds will also be used for climate change research and wildlife conservation programs.

The Low Carbon Economy Act will succeed where dozens of other proposals, past and present, have fallen short. It will not damage our standard of living, harm our resource industries, or deny us the prosperity needed for environmental regulation. This bill promises to protect our environment — and it will generate economic growth by pro-

moting the expansion of our coal industry. At long last, Alaska's geologic potential for lower-cost and environmentally-friendly carbon sequestration will be fulfilled.

Admittedly, the Low Carbon Economy Act is not perfect. It is complex, comprehensive, and could create more bureaucracy. But it is also a reasoned attempt to tackle climate change without panicking. Our approach is flexible: If sound science reveals more must be done, we will strengthen the bill and its "cap and trade" program. If experience shows it is harming the competitiveness of American firms, or allowing growing carbon emitters throughout the world to undercut our economy, we will ease the bill's provisions, protect our workers and push those nations to cut their emissions.

This measure is much more prac-



Murkowski

tical than those introduced by several of our colleagues in the 110th Congress. Researchers at MIT predict one competing bill, intended to cut 80 percent of carbon emissions by 2050, would cost consumers half a trillion dollars. The average family of four would thus pay \$4,920 more for energy each year by 2050 — a staggering, unacceptable burden.

Again, though, the consequences of inaction may be even greater. Scientists from the International Arctic Research Center believe northern permafrost lakes will release five times more methane — a greenhouse gas 23 times more potent than carbon dioxide — if global temperatures rise another 3 to 4 degrees. As thawing permafrost lakes in Alaska and Siberia release their methane deposits, global temperatures may increase as much as 8 to 14 additional

degrees, far beyond the threshold where serious environmental damage begins.

Climate change is a serious problem that demands serious consideration, and hot air from politicians debating this matter will only add to the hot air in our atmosphere. We must do all we can to avoid the increasingly severe effects of climate change. By reducing domestic carbon emissions, we will reduce the impact of human activities in a manner that protects our environment and our economy. Adopting a serious policy — the Low Carbon Economy Act — to accomplish this goal is a much better option than hoping the vast majority of 21st century scientists turn out to be wrong.

Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski represent Alaska in the U.S. Senate.

CONSIDER THIS

Today on the Web, the Daily News seeks your thoughts on what an editorial should say about the senators' global warming legislation. See the Inside Opinion blog for more information about this new interactive way of researching editorials, a feature we call "Consider This." Print-only readers can send their information or advice by e-mailing considerthis@adn.com.

